TL1775

California Legislature

STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

April 22, 1993

President Bill Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear President Clinton:

As Portuguese-Americans, as State Legislators, and as human beings, we are concerned about the illegal occupation of East Timor by Indonesian armed forces and by the gross violations of human rights there.

As you know, East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. Indonesia continues to occupy East Timor and claims the country as an Indonesian province. This claim is not recognized by the United Nations.

But Indonesia has not only annexed East Timor illegally. As documented by Amnesty International, Asia Watch, and other human rights monitors, it has committed gross violations of human rights there. Young Timorese languish in prison for having engaged in peaceful protest. Others simply "disappear." There are numerous reports of widespread torture. It has been estimated that up to one-third of the East Timorese population has died as a result of Indonesian occupation.

While the plight of the East Timorese may be unknown to many people in this country, we can assure you that this issue is very important to Portuguese-Americans. We share a language, a culture, and a history with the Timorese. Our Portuguese-language newspapers in California report frequently about East Timor. Many of us have met Timorese. Their lives are not just abstractions or statistics for us.

But if we are to achieve self-determination for East Timor, we must act on a national level. The United States must make it clear to the Indonesian leaders that we will no longer tolerate their brutal occupation of East Timor, and we should refuse to supply aid and arms to Indonesia until it withdraws from East Timor.

We respectfully ask you to make that commitment.

Sincerely,

Senator Henry J. Mello
15th Senate District

Assemblyman Fred Aguiar
61st Assembly District

Assemblyman Rusty Areias
28th Assembly District

Assemblyman John Vasconcellos
22nd Assembly District

Assemblywoman Kathleen Honeycutt
34th Assembly District

Assemblyman Jim Costa
30th Assembly District